Club status decision must wait for trial

Injunction rejected

THE GAZETTE FILE

Counterprotesters line up on the northwest corner of Platte and Nevada last month with signs in response to the Westboro Baptist Church's demonstration against a Gay Straight Alliance at Palmer High School.

By **SHARI CHANEY**
THE GAZETTE

A Gay Straight Alliance won't be granted official club status while awaiting trial on how the group should be recognized, a judge has ruled.

A group of students filed suit in 2003 against Palmer High School and Colorado Springs School District 11 after the district denied the Gay Straight Alliance recognition as a club, eventually telling students the club was not curriculum-related.

Student organizers argued the policy was discriminatory because other clubs also weren't related to the curriculum.

After the district was sued, it clarified its policy, saying noncurriculum clubs would not be officially recognized. Nine clubs at Palmer, and 30 districtwide, were reclassified as independent clubs.

The ruling March 30 denied a preliminary injunction that would have given the Gay Straight Alliance official status until a trial could be held.

Alfred McDonnell, attorney for the plaintiffs, said he is disappointed in the ruling, but said, "This is just the preliminary round."

Ellie Collinson, executive director of Citizens Project who has worked with the plaintiffs, said that because the Gay Straight Alliance is classified as an independent club, it cannot use the school's public address system and fliers must be posted on a community bulletin board near the school's main office.

Independent groups also are not pic-

SEE **PALMER** • PAGE 4

Gazette April 5, 2005

space, the ways it benefits society, national security, medical benefits."

The symposium continues through Thursday.

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ken workers

urn ill after sewer problems

Willener said staff members noticed a smell when they opened the office early Monday and tried to air it out by leaving the doors open.

"Those sewer drains needed to be flushed out, and because the building was closed all weekend it just made the fumes pretty potent," Willener said.

Crews flushed the sewer line, but the remaining fumes still sickened the staff.

The Clerk and Recorder has offices at 200 S. Cascade Ave. in downtown Colorado Springs and on the north side of the Chapel Hills Mall, 1710 Briargate Blvd. Clerk and Recorder offices are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

Clerk and Recorder Bob Balink said his office has been searching for a new location to serve the southern part of the county since October.

bringing in about $250 the past year, the affidavit said.

The court papers also allege Moynier was selling marijuana and psilocybin mushrooms.

Compare nation's hospitals

A new Web site offers information on how hospitals nationwide — including those in Colorado Springs — compare in treatments for heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia.

The consumer site, called Hospital Compare, is at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov.

The site lists, for example, the percentage of heart attack and pneumonia patients given smoking-cessation advice or counseling.

Lodge blast's cause a mystery

DELTA • The Delta County sheriff said Monday that investigators might never learn the cause of an explosion and fire that killed three children and injured 16 people at a remote lodge last month.

Investigators think a propane leak fueled the March 19 blast at the Electric Mountain Lodge near Paonia, but Sheriff Fred McKee said the fire that followed was so hot it probably erased clues about what ignited the gas.

McKee said there was no reason to believe the blast was anything but an accident.

Victims of the blast are presumed to be Leslie Ann Bilbrey, 12; Isaac Michael Watkins, 2; and Jamie Marie Reade, 16. DNA testing is under way to make positive identifications of the three extended family members.

THE GAZETTE AND NEWS SERVICES

PALMER: Limitations hinder club

FROM PAGE 1

tured in the yearbook, and faculty members who oversee an independent group do not receive a stipend.

It's difficult to get word out about meetings and activities with the limitations, Collinson said. It's also difficult to find a volunteer adviser. Groups should have equal access to resources such as bulletin boards and teacher advisors, she said.

District 11 spokeswoman Elaine Naleski said the district is pleased with the ruling.

The two-tier system — one classification for noncurriculum-related clubs and another for curriculum-related clubs — keeps the district in compliance with the Equal Access Act, Naleski said.

The federal act says if a school grants official recognition to a noncurriculum-related student group, then all student groups must be recognized as official groups.

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